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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: TALKING POINTS FOR OCTOBER 23 BRIEFING

REF: STATE 99175

1. USUN may draw from the following talking points and those in reftel for their October 23 briefing on the situation between Djibouti and Eritrea. USUN should seek to speak last so they can adequately determine if the "If Raised" point is needed.

Begin points:

-- The United States would like to thank President Ismail Omar Guelleh for traveling to New York to brief the Council on the continuing crisis in Djibouti. The United States remains extremely concerned about the military occupation of Djiboutian territory by Eritrean Defense Forces. Today, I would like to make two (three, if "If Raised" point used) important points.

-- First, the Djiboutian government is to be commended for their commitment to finding a peaceful solution to this crisis. The UN Fact Finding Mission to Djibouti has clearly documented the extent to which the Djiboutian government has worked to resolve this crisis peacefully. The government of Eritrea, however, has flouted international law by invading its neighbor in violation of the UN Charter. This incursion sparked an armed conflict that left 44 Djiboutian soldiers dead and many more missing and presumed to be imprisoned by the Eritrean Defense Forces. The Government of Eritrea's failure even to acknowledge the existence of the problem, let alone the seriousness of the situation, is an insult both to the people of Djibouti and the international community's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

-- Second, the Security Council should take appropriate action to help Djibouti find a resolution to this crisis. Since Eritrea refuses to engage on the issue, Djibouti has very few options available to resolve the situation peacefully. The UN's Fact Finding Mission has recommended the UN dispatch a high-level envoy to the area to engage with Eritrea to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. The Fact Finding Mission further noted, "in the event that the offer by the UN is again rebuffed by Eritrea, the matter should be referred to the Security Council for appropriate action." The seriousness of these recommendations follows from the report's finding that "(a) sovereign country is being drawn into a crippling and unaffordable military mobilization, to deal with a situation that may ultimately threaten national, regional, and international peace."

In line with the report's recommendations, the United States calls on the UN to dispatch a high-level envoy immediately. Eritrea should be given a definitive time-frame in which to accept the assistance of the UN, the AU, or any other state, organization, or body that is acceptable to both parties to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. However, if Eritrea rebuffs any such efforts at resolution, the Council must react appropriately. If we fail to do so, not only do we risk yet another costly and tragic war in an area that has already suffered tremendously, but we risk the credibility of this great body.

If Raised (to be deployed only if another speaker tries to suggest a link between the Djibouti-Eritrea crisis and the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict): Finally, there can be no link between the crisis on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea and the Ethiopia-Eritrea border impasse. Eritrea cannot be allowed to use its invasion of its sovereign and peaceful neighbor to affect settlement of another dispute.

end points
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